


LONDON
REVIEW PANEL


Project Director
Stanhope PLC

June 2022

Dear 

London Review Panel: 55 Bishopsgate, City of London

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of 55 Bishopsgate on the 22nd June 2022. I would like to thank you for your participation in the review.

Yours sincerely,


Mayor's Design Advocate

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Philip Graham, Executive Director of Good Growth, GLA

Louise Duggan, Head of Regeneration, GLA

LONDON

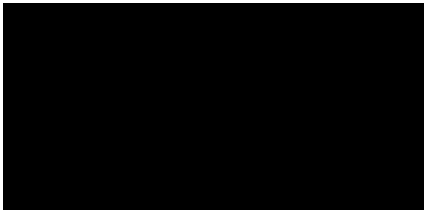
REVIEW PANEL

Report of London Review Panel meeting for 55 Bishopsgate, City of London

Wednesday 22nd June 2022

Review held in person. A site visit took place ahead of the review.

London Review Panel



MDA
MDA (Chair)
MDA
MDA
MDA

Attendees



AFK Studios
AFK Studios
City of London
DP9
DP9
GLA Planning
GLA Planning
GLA Planning
GLA Planning
GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)
Hilson Moran
Stanhope PLC
Townshend Landscape Architects

Report copied to

Jules Pipe	Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
Philip Graham	GLA Executive Director of Good Growth
Louise Duggan	GLA Head of Regeneration

Confidentiality and publication

Please note that while schemes are not yet in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, will be treated as confidential, as a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review. Review reports will target publication to the London Review Panel webpage six months following the review unless otherwise agreed.

London Review Panel's Views

Summary

The panel commend the team on a clear and thorough presentation. The panel agree that there is a tension between working with existing buildings and demolishing to replace with new. Should the project proceed with replacement, this new building must be exemplary in terms of design and sustainability to justify the demolition. The panel encourage the team to be clear on the role of this building in the city and ensure it can contribute to the legibility of the street. The panel agree the architectural approach is interesting but would encourage the team to ensure the building contributes to the city fabric and creation of legible places. The panel advise the team to ensure the project contributes as much meaningful activity as possible along its public realm edges, activating adjacent sites and the street. The quality of the structure and core as it touches the ground level needs to be very carefully considered and impact minimised to ensure the public realm is free flowing and effective. The team are encouraged to capture the activity and energy of the city at all times of the day to avoid unused and unwelcoming places after office hours.

The team are advised to clarify the programme of uses and its contribution to the city at ground level and in the wider public realm. The panel recommend a clearer purpose for the activity at the second and third floor which is currently identified very broadly for community use. The panel challenge the vague programme for education use at the top of the building and would ask the team to develop a specific and meaningful programme for learning in this space. The panel agreed that the height of the overall building could be reduced to improve the composition as part of the tall building cluster. The panel support the curving form of the building and acknowledge this provides a polite response as a tall building that helps in key views.

Public realm

Contribution to street and place legibility

- The panel understand there is a tension between wanting to maximise the public realm offer and creating a legible part of the street that contributes to a sense of place and frontage along Broadgate.
- The panel would question whether the proposals provide a convincing street enclosure when approaching from Threadneedle Street.
- The panel suggest the current approach to design has been driven by more longer views across the city rather than the building in its local street context. The panel recommend the team give greater consideration to the proposals impact from the immediate surroundings and from a pedestrian perspective.
- The panel understand the balance needed between taking away the street frontage and encouraging people to come into the space and agree that this approach is reliant on other buildings retaining their street frontage approach to work.
- The panel acknowledge that the existing building on the site does not currently positively contribute to the street activity and that this proposal starts to offer the potential for this.

Quality public realm

- The panel believe the proposed public realm, particularly at the front of the site, feels like leftover space and this really should be one of the most important parts of the scheme.
- The panel acknowledge that there is a real pressure on the public realm in this part of the city and this project needs to provide functional and quality space.
- The panel agree this has the potential to be a new type of public space in the city but suggests further development is needed to be clear how this will work and the benefits it offers.
- The panel encourage the team to consider what would draw people in from the street as opposed to other public spaces around the site.
- The panel agree that the current approach removes the street legibility to create a building that lands in its own space, producing lots of floating space. This scheme is reliant on other sites around it to provide containment and ground floor frontage and is not able to control what comes forward.
- The panel emphasise the importance of quality as well as quantum of public space being proposed.

Elements hitting the ground

- The panel agree that if this is to be a successful tall building that comes to ground then the core arrangement needs to make sense with the public realm. A good example of this is the Leadenhall Building, where the core is shifted to ensure a successful public ground floor.
- The panel encourage the team to ensure that the structural elements that hit the pavement are well made and well detailed and celebrate the space. This should avoid creating awkward passing junctions for pedestrians that can require remedial works to avoid people hitting their heads.
- The panel advise the team to review the lifts and other core elements, seeking to minimise its impact at ground floor level to allow for as free flowing and uninterrupted space as possible. This would potentially provide an opportunity to include active frontages in the remaining core edges. This could include new retail, food and drink and seating opportunities.
- The panel suggests that rotating the core might be one of the things considered in order to create more useable and quality public realm.
- A particular area of concern is the lifts adjacent to Tower 42 which could limit the future connection between these two sites and should be reviewed.

Volumes of the undercroft

- Some of the panel considered the balance between the reduced volume to the undercroft space, and the additional public realm was not yet adequately resolved. This includes the difference in height between the main and satellite buildings.
- The panel suggest that the floor to soffit heights of the public realm spaces at ground level should be generous, with clear visible links to and from levels 2 and 3.
- The team are encouraged to further develop views from inside the undercroft space looking out to the street and connecting sites and to better understand how these spaces will feel and work at all times of day and night.

Under the satellite block

- The panel were concerned about the servicing strategy under the satellite block as this would take the public realm out of action for approximately 12 hours a day e.g., from 7pm to 7am. It would also be subject to significant wear and tear and the source of odour and noise.
- The panel questioned how successful this space would be as a street space and what state it would be in after 6 months of operation.
- The current uses proposed for this space, given the need for overnight access to the lifts were therefore unconvincing.
- The panel would advise the team better to understand some examples of similar the platform lift installed at the British Library to inform further development of this strategy.

Adjacent sites

- The panel suggest that the current approach to the ground floor means that there is a reliance on the adjacent sites to activate their site boundary edges, as well as this proposal proscribing what happens to these edge activities.
- This proposal is putting responsibility on the adjacent sites being developed sympathetically to help deliver the vision for this site and wider area. The panel agree that the applicant need to robustly demonstrate that this proposal would also work without these adjacent sites coming forward and, in the meantime, should this happen later.
- The panel advise the team to establish a programme of design conversations with the adjacent sites to provide a forum of exchange that allows for all sites to develop in a cohesive and complimentary manner even if they are working to different timescales.

Microclimate at ground level

- The panel would encourage the team to ensure the microclimatic conditions for the ground level public realm provides a comfortable and well-designed environment that encourages people to dwell.
- The team need to ensure sufficient daylight and sunlight is achieved and that wind conditions are comfortable and mitigated where any issues are highlighted through testing.

Journeys through the site and building

- The panel agree that the public needs to be carefully considered and positive all users.
- The panel would ask the design team to consider the journey for workers who cannot use the escalators and set out what the equivalent journey of experiences and conflicts between different user groups would be for those with different mobility needs.
- The panel question whether the rooftop spiral stair journey can be similarly replicated for those who cannot use the stairs.
- The panel advise the team to ensure the servicing strategy does not create conflict with other road and public realm users. This could include ensuring there is a place

for service vehicles to park off Bishopsgate Road should the service lift be immediately unavailable.

Programme of activity

Supporting a 24-hour city

- The panel agree that the city does not shut off after 7pm but is in fact the time when key spaces and streets, including the one to the rear of the site come alive.
- The panel are not convinced that the current servicing strategy supports a 24-hour city or is realistic about the impact of the service lifts on the public realm and related activities.
- The panel encourage the team to develop a public realm that can also support after office hour activity.
- The panel agree future proofing connections is important to better connect and compliment the proposed public realm to the thriving afterhours activity around Tower 42.

Specific programmes of activity

- The panel agree that there needs to be more clarity on the activities envisioned for the spaces in level 2 and 3 of the satellite block and main building, the ground floor public realm and the rooftop garden.
- These spaces indicated are currently generic, and the team need to be more specific about the programme of activities and uses that will occupy these spaces to really offer something of value to the City and beyond. This will ensure they are well designed to their function and needs including acoustic crossover from noisy to quiet areas and avoid duplicating functions already being provided for nearby.
- The educational space on the rooftop is currently designed as a hopeful vision but its educational purpose and is not yet clear. This needs more definition of what will be taught at height in that space other than just providing a view of the city.

Sustainability

Justification for demolition of existing and building new

- The panel would highlight the importance of circular economy principles in developing a sustainable future city and would challenge the team to be robust in their justification for the demolition of the existing building.

Justification for a tall building

- The panel agree that the buildings sustainability credentials need to be exemplary to justify such a tall proposal in the current climate emergency context.
- The building also needs to be of exemplary design quality to justify this height in this important location on the edge of the main cluster.

Energy consumption and overheating

- The panel advise the team to carefully consider what the energy consumption of the building will be when setting out the sustainability strategy.
- The team need to ensure that overheating risk and cooling requirements are well considered.

Social sustainability

- The panel encourage the team to ensure that the potential public and education uses proposed will be relevant in the long term and purposeful. The team should ensure these spaces remain a socially sustainable amenity for the lifetime of the building.

City cluster views

Height and massing and contribution to the City cluster of tall buildings

- The panel do not agree with the team's rationale that the proposed height balances the city cluster from the views provided, or that it provides enough mediation when stepping down between the other taller and shorter existing buildings. Rather the current height simply makes this side of the city cluster nearly as big as the other side and clashes with the shoulder height on nearby buildings.
- The panel were not convinced that even if the proposal's massing balanced and mediated the existing cluster that this would be perceived in the human experience of moving through the city. This therefore reduces the importance of this justification for the current proposed height and massing.

Views from the bridges

- The panel agree the view from the Blue Bridge is quite flattering in the render provided, with the tapered form helping to reduce its impact.
- The panel suggest the view from Waterloo Bridge shows the proposal is too large and would contribute to this side of the cluster better if the height was reduced.

Architecture

Mathematical design strategy

- The panel agree the geometry developed through the mathematical and structural loadings has created an elegant proposal although as noted above this does not necessarily make it an effective city building at street level.
- This interesting approach to designing the building is one strategy that cannot be replicated across the city as a whole or in too great a number. It creates a landmark rather than a background city building.

Glass specification

- The proposal is significantly glass externally and this will be a big part of how the building is experienced as it will reflect the sky from various angles.
- The panel advise the team to carefully consider the specification of the glass used for this building envelope to ensure it is technically resolved and behaves as intended. The panel suggested that the Shard glass works well while some other tall glass buildings do not.
- This level of detail will likely be captured as a planning requirement, but the team should develop their approach to this robustly and from an early stage.

Satellite building design

- The panel agree the smaller satellite building attached to the taller tower could benefit from a different architectural approach, rather than repeating in mini form

the larger building. This would allow the satellite building to develop its own personality.

Volume of space for activities proposed

- The panel advise the team to consider the floor to ceiling heights in the level 2 and 3 spaces in the satellite building intended for community uses.
- The panel suggest 2.8m floor to ceiling heights across both floors would not provide the flexibility for uses such as accommodating screens or staging.
- The panel do not think a food court would be of meaningful public benefit in these spaces.
- The team are advised to look at precedents such as Kings Place which provide cultural uses and works well with the need to provide flexibility and the larger floor to ceilings heights that are likely to be needed.

Rooftop garden

- The panel agree there needs to be a compelling reason for people to want to go to the top of this tower in particular and the team need to further develop this justification.
- The panel note there are many similar rooftop gardens nearby and wanted to understand better what this additional rooftop garden will add to this part of the City. The panel suggest the Shard does this well (albeit a paid attraction) and the team should review other precedents to understand the purpose and attraction of successful and unsuccessful rooftop tower gardens.
- The panel note that rooftop gardens require a large amount of resources to operate including energy and cost for access and security.
- The panel encourage the team to develop the detail of the rooftop garden to ensure it is a truly civic publicly accessible space that acts as a real piece of public realm with a supporting programme of public events.

Next Steps

The panel thanks the applicant for its clear presentation of the scheme and is available to review the scheme again if requested to do so by the GLA.